

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
(SPECIAL)

26th January 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Wilkins (Chair) and Councillors Lane, Lauro (substitute for Councillor Pabla), Mrs. Mead (substitute for Councillor Richards), Southerd, Southern and Whyman, M.B.E.

Conservative Group

Councillors Harrison, Lemmon, Nalty and Mrs. Wheeler.

In Attendance

Councillor Murphy (Labour Group).

NNDR Representatives

Mrs. J. Smith, Southern Derbyshire Council for Voluntary Services.

Reverend D. Frudd, Swadlincote Council for Churches.

Mr. G. Royall, Citizens Advice Bureau.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Pabla (Vice-Chair) and Richards (Labour Group).

Apologies had also been received from Ms. Susan Bell (National Forest Company), Mr. G. Keddie (East Midlands Airport), Councillor G. Carlile (Derbyshire County Council), Professor R. Waterhouse (University of Derby), Mr. T. Garfield (Sports Council East Midlands Region), Mr. T. Laws (Learning and Skills Council), Mrs. N. Ennis (Derbyshire Dales and South Derbyshire Primary Care Trust) and Ms. K. Jones (Trident Housing Association).

FM/85. **SPENDING PLANS 2004/05**

The Meeting received a presentation from Mr. T. Neaves, Chief Finance Officer. He explained the aims of the consultation exercise and gave an overview of the topics covered in the presentation. Feedback from previous consultations had identified reasons for key priorities and the other aims that the Council should pursue. The total cost of services plus some £8.7m and a series of charts showed the costs of Environmental Services, Community Services and Finance and Management services. Details were given of the services provided by Derbyshire County Council and the Police Authority together with a chart showing the respective proportions of council tax income that funded these services.

Mr. Neaves explained how the Council managed its finances, focusing on a three year medium term. The Council's current financial position was stable with improving levels of reserves. However, there was a need for caution as the Council was spending more than it received in income at present. This was again demonstrated by graphs. Mr. Neaves then explained the financial constraints that the Council faced, levels of Government grant and how this

affected the level of council tax increase. The budget proposals were reported and these sought to maintain existing services and to provide additional resources for service improvements and additional investment in Council building and major projects. The Council sought to provide better services for a growing population and to improve local facilities.

The Chair invited questions from the NNDR representatives attending. Mrs. J. Smith (CVS) referred to the Community Partnership Scheme and questioned whether the criteria for applying for such funding would remain unchanged. Mr. T. Neaves advised that there was no intention to review such criteria. Mrs. Smith expressed concern that the CVS had not been consulted regarding this type of funding and suggested that partnership working in this area would be useful. Councillor Whyman advised that better communication with the CVS was needed in this regard.

Reverend Frudd raised concern regarding the Council's cemeteries and advised that he felt that the issues surrounding the cemeteries were more than health and safety issues. He stated that there was a need to look at the management of records for cemeteries and expressed concern that he had recently attended a funeral where the wrong grave had been dug. Councillor Murphy advised that he had received similar complaints from his constituents and this was not acceptable. Mr. I. Reid, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that sometimes mistakes on cemetery records had occurred some twenty years ago and staff were not aware of such mistakes until these unfortunate incidents occurred. However, staff were currently endeavouring to improve the records in order to prevent such incidents occurring again in the future.

(At 6.45 p.m. Councillor Lemmon left the Meeting.)

Reverend Frudd asked for a progress report on the National Forest Line and was advised by Councillor Southerd that the Government had suggested it should be considered in its multi-modal study but had given a timescale of some 30 years. Councillor Southerd stated that there was a need to encourage more freight use within the District. It was reported that of the six local authorities involved in the National Forest Line most were in favour of the proposals but Leicestershire County Council did not consider it to be financially viable. Derbyshire County Council had disagreed with this view by referring to the success of the Robin Hood Line. Representatives from South Derbyshire were considering whether a better solution would be to make a start on the Line this side of the National Forest i.e. from South Derbyshire to Burton.

Reverend Frudd referred to the number of freight vehicles travelling through housing estates and was advised that the Council had been lobbying Derbyshire County Council on this particular issue. Councillor Southerd reported that a pre-requisite condition of Bison Concrete occupying the site on William Nadin Way was that the Company exported 80% of its output by rail freight.

The Chair thanked all those for attending, and there being no further questions declared the Meeting closed.

P.J. WILKINS

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 6.55 p.m.